

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /056 W

----- 076407

P R 290843Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8128

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL SEOUL 622

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV KS

SUBJECT: REFERENDUM

REF: SEOUL 562

1. ROKG, EVIDENTLY INTENT ON AVOIDING PRE-REFERENDUM CONFRONTATION WITH OPPOSITION, HAS INDICATED THAT IT WILL APPLY RESTRICTIONS OF REFERENDUM LAW WITH SOME LENIENCY. OPPOSITION, FOR ITS PART, UNSURE ABOUT HOW TO IMPLEMENT ITS AVOWED POLICY OF BOYCOTT.

2. KIM CHONG-YOM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF PRESIDENT PARK'S STAFF, TOLD AMBASSADOR JAN 28 THAT WHILE OPPOSITION APPEALS TO BOYCOTT THE REFERENDUM WERE ILLEGAL, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED, FOR THE TIME BEING, TO BE LENIENT IN ENFORCING THIS ASPECT OF THE REFERENDUM LAW. KIM SAID THAT IN ANY CASE, POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM LAW WOULD BE DECIDED ON A "CASE BY CASE BASIS".

3. KIM SAID THAT THE FORMAL REFERENDUM ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE FEB 5, AT THIS TIME, WE PRESUME, SPECIFIC QUESTION ON WHICH PUBLIC WILL VOTE WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ANNOUNCED. GENERAL VIEW NOW IS THAT QUESTION WILL SIMPLY BE: "DO YOU AGREE WITH OR OPPOSE THE MAIN POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT?"

4. THUS FAR WE HAVE HEARD OF ONLY THREE ARRESTS FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM LAW: A DRUNK ON A BUS WAS GIVEN SEVEN DAYS FOR DENOUNCING THE REFERENDUM; A RAILWAY WORKER FINED 1,500 WON FOR A SIMILAR OFFENSE, AND A THEOLOGICAL STUDENT PICKED UP, BUT NOT YET CONVICTED, FOR DISTRIBUTING AN ANTI-REFERENDUM LEAFLET.

5. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAVE INDICATED INDECISION AND SOME DISSENSION REGARDING NDP ACTIONS ON THE REFERENDUM. ONE ASSEMBLYMAN TOLD US THAT, ALTHOUGH POLICY OF URGING A BOYCOTT WAS CLEAR, METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY WAS IN DOUBT: SOME WERE URGING EACH ASSEMBLYMAN TO STIMULATE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THEIR HOME DISTRICTS, OTHERS WERE IN FAVOR OF MASSED ASSEMBLY MEMBER DEMONSTRATIONS IN SEOUL. ONE PROMINENT OPPOSITION MEMBER, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID HE OPPOSED BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN AND THOUGHT THE NDP MIGHT DO BETTER BY WORKING FOR AS HEAVY A "NO" VOTE AS POSSIBLE IN THE REFERENDUM. HE NOTED THAT KIM YONG-SAM'S RATHER STRONG STATEMENTS ON THE REFERENDUM IN THE US AND JAPAN HAD STRUCK SOME PARTY MEMBERS AS A LITTLE TOO INFLAMMATORY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NDP EXPECTS TO HAVE ITS REFERENDUM STRATEGY DECIDED UPON BY JAN 31.

SNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

YONG-SAM'S RATHER STRONG STATEMENTS ON THE REFERENDUM IN THE US AND JAPAN HAD STRUCK SOME PARTY MEMBERS AS A LITTLE TOO INFLAMMATORY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NDP EXPECTS TO HAVE ITS REFERENDUM STRATEGY DECIDED UPON BY JAN 31.

SNEIDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFERENDUMS, OPPOSITION PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SEOUL00622
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750032-0675
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750189/baaaaudi.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <16 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KS, (KIM CHONG-YOM)
To: STATE INFO TOKYO
CINCPAC
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006